(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the progress made in this regard, and the time by which it is likely to be completed; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) A By-pass already exists.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Meeting with U.S. Diplomats

225. SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN :
SHRI PARASRAM BHARDWAJ :
SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had recently asked an official of US embassy to leave the country within twenty four hours for indulging in spying activities;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any Indian official was involved in the said affairs;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Ministry has lodged any protest with the U.S. authorities in this regard; and

(f) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) and (b) Following reports of unauthorized contacts between a senior Home Ministry official and some diplomats based in the US Embassy in New Delhi, Government asked for the withdrawal of the concerned US officials. The US Embassy has informed us that this has been complied with.

(c) and (d) The matter involved allegations against a senior official. The official involved has taken voluntary retirement from Government service.

(e) and (f) The seriousness with which Government of India view the matter has been conveyed to the US authorities. Government decision asking for withdrawal of the concerned US officials reflects the same seriousness.

[Translation]

Escorts Heart Institute

226. SHRI JAGATVIR SINGH DRONA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre, New Delhi is in the list of referral hospitals for the treatment of civilian defence employees;

(b) if so, whether the Government reimburse the full amount of expenditure to the defence employees charged by the said Institute;

(c) if not, the amount of expenditure borne by the Government;

(d) whether the gratuity payment of an employee working in Defence Institute, Kanpur has been withheld as the full expenditure incurred against his treatment in the said Institute has not been given by the Government;

(e) whether a large number of defence employees are deprived from undergoing treatment in the said Institute as they are unable to meet the expenditure of the Institute; and

(f) if so, the number of deprived employees died so far ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The rates fixed under the package deal by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are reimbursed to the Central Government employees including defence civilians. The amount, if any, charged by the hospital in excess of the rates prescribed under the package deal, is to be borne by the employees concerned.

(d) No such institute exists under the Ministry of Defence. However, gratuity payment of an employee working in Small Arms Factory, Kanpur has been with held for adjustment of medical advance which was in excess of package deal amount.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Question does not arise in view of the reply to (e) above.

[English]

Recycled Syringe Racket Thriving

227. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI :
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Recycled syringe racket thriving" appearing in 'The Hindustan Times' dated December 26, 1996;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) Yes, Sir.